



**PRESS RELEASE**  
*Office of the United States Attorney  
Middle District of Florida*

**PAUL I. PEREZ**  
**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY**

400 North Tampa Street  
Suite 3200  
Tampa, Florida 33602  
813/274-6000  
813/274-6300 (Fax)

300 North Hogan Street  
Suite 700  
Jacksonville, Florida 32201  
904/301-6300  
904/301-6310 (Fax)

501 West Church Street  
Suite 300  
Orlando, Florida 32805  
407/648-7500  
407/648-7643 (Fax)

2110 First Street  
Suite 3-137  
Fort Myers, Florida 33901  
239/461-2200  
239/461-2219 (fax)

**Contact: Steve Cole ♦ Public Affairs Specialist ♦ 813/274-6352**

**For Immediate Release**

December 7, 2006

**OCALA BANK ROBBER FACING 50-YEAR MINIMUM  
MANDATORY SENTENCE AFTER CONVICTIONS ON  
FEDERAL BANK ROBBERY AND FIREARMS CHARGES**

Ocala, Florida - A jury in U.S. District Court today found EDGAR HOOPER III, age 34, of Orlando, guilty of three counts of bank robbery and two counts of possessing a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence. The maximum sentence HOOPER faces on each of the bank robbery counts is twenty-five years' imprisonment; the minimum penalty HOOPER faces on each of the firearms counts is twenty-five years' imprisonment and the maximum is life imprisonment. Furthermore, the prison term on each of the firearms counts must be served consecutively, resulting in a mandatory minimum fifty-year sentence. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled in approximately seventy-five days before the Honorable Wm. Terrell Hodges, Senior United States District Court Judge.

According to the evidence presented at trial, HOOPER robbed the same branch of the Merchant and Southern Bank, 5400 SW College Road, Ocala, three times between June 19 and August 2, 2006. Concerning the June 19th robbery, HOOPER and an unknown accomplice entered the bank and threatened to kill employees before fleeing with

federally insured funds. In a second robbery on July 19th, HOOPER and an accomplice brandished firearms at bank employees and an 82-year old customer in the bank's lobby. After leaping the counter and grabbing money from the teller line, the men fled the bank. HOOPER returned to the bank again on August 2, 2006. Acting alone, HOOPER entered the bank with a firearm and shouted at employees. He immediately was confronted, however, by an off-duty Ocala Police officer who was inside the bank. After a short foot chase, HOOPER was apprehended by a K-9 from the Marion County Sheriff's Office. HOOPER, who was on supervised release for a previous federal armed bank robbery conviction, subsequently confessed to his role in all three robberies.

The case represents the culmination of a cooperative effort between the United States Attorney's Office, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the State Attorney's Office for the Fifth Judicial Circuit, the Ocala Police Department and the Marion County Sheriff's Office. This is another case prosecuted as a part the Department of Justice program "Project Safe Neighborhoods" - a nationwide gun violence reduction initiative with strong support from ATF. United States Attorney Paul I. Perez is coordinating the cooperative effort here in the Middle District of Florida with federal, state and local law enforcement officials. The objective is to reduce violent crime by locating and seizing unlawfully possessed guns and then swiftly prosecuting the offenders using both federal and state gun laws.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Robert E. Bodnar, Jr., and Special Assistant United States Attorney Gregory J. Konieczka.